



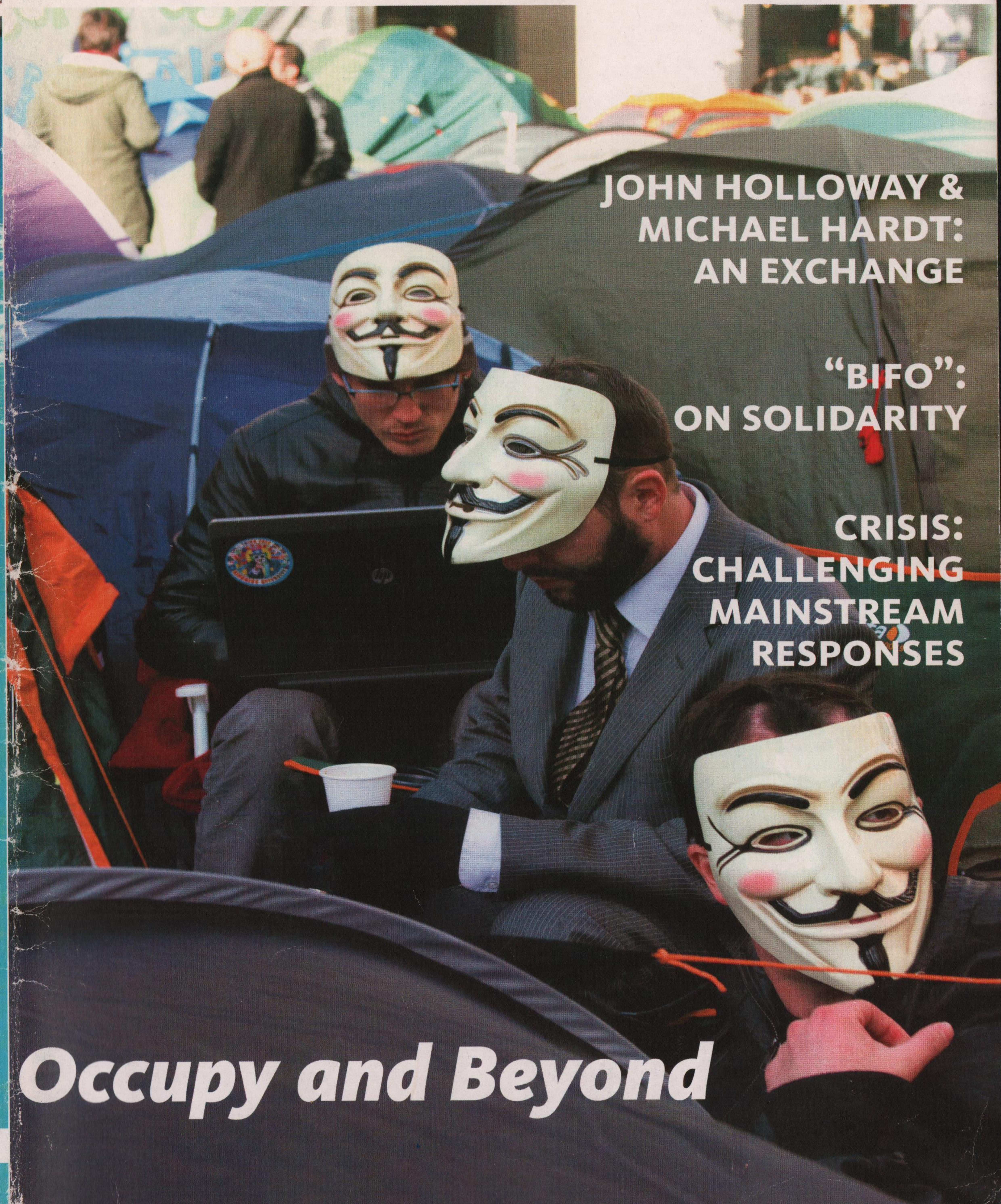
shift magazine

issue 14 / Jan '12 - May '12 / £2

**JOHN HOLLOWAY &
MICHAEL HARDT:
AN EXCHANGE**

**“BIFO”:
ON SOLIDARITY**

**CRISIS:
CHALLENGING
MAINSTREAM
RESPONSES**



Occupy and Beyond

www.shiftmag.co.uk

January '12 - May '12

Contents

Shift Magazine Issue 14

4 Towards an anti-capitalist Plan C? An interview with David Harvie

DAVID HARVIE on how anti-capitalists can engage with the various institutional responses to the crisis

8 Scandalous bodies in occupied London

SAUL NEWMAN argues that the beautiful, disarming gesture of sleeping in the street represents a real moment of rupture

10 Semio-capital and the problem of solidarity

FRANCO 'BIFO' BERARDI on precarity, solidarity and Europe

13 Creating Commonwealth and Cracking Capitalism

In the first of a two-part SHIFT exclusive, MICHAEL HARDT and JOHN HOLLOWAY discuss common themes - organisation, democracy and institutionalism - raised in their most recent books 'Commonwealth' and 'Crack Capitalism'

18 Homeowners: the gravediggers of capital

TOM FOX continues SHIFT's series on lifestyle politics with a critical look at housing co-operatives

21 In defence of lifestyle politics

Another article in our series on lifestyle politics, here MATT WILSON responds to JOSIE HOOKER and LAUREN WROE's call in Issue 13 to 'Give up lifestyle!'

24 Reproduction, reproduction, reproduction: beyond the factory desert

NEIL GRAY calls for a militant politics of urban space as a means of going beyond traditional workplace struggle

EDITED BY

Lauren Wroe, Raphael Schlembach, Ben Lear, Josie Hooker

CREDITS

PICTURE CREDIT: (front cover) Tamara Crain/flickr; (p.5) C-Monster; (p.9) ageing accozzaglia; (p.12) GanMed64; (p.15) Josh McAfee; (p.19) ryoryozo; (p.22) antrophistoria.blogspot.com; (p.25) Chris Stain

CONTACT SHIFT

shiftmagazine@hotmail.co.uk

Printed by Footprint Workers' Cooperative

editorial

Much has changed since 2008. The crisis of capital presents itself to us in multiple, shifting forms; sovereign debt, food, energy, housing and the environment are all in crisis, whilst the date for an 'inevitable' recovery of growth and the return of confidence in financial markets recedes ever further into the horizon. Plan A, that of austerity and the further implementation of market based solutions, has, as David Harvie points out in this issue (p.4), failed completely; whilst calls for a return to a Keynesian plan B remain unconvincing.

Looking back on the last 18 months there has been a massive upsurge in political activity against an increasingly de-legitimised political system and against economic austerity. The situation is vastly different to the depoliticised world many of us once organised in. History is once more up for grabs. Yet when faced with the vast scale of the assault on our lives and the potential for positive social change, our previous forms of activity have never looked more impotent. Spectacular activism and alienating, purist lifestyle politics (see 'Homeowners: the gravedigger's of capital', p.18) are unlikely to be the forms appropriate for the task at hand.

Over the past 18 months we have witnessed a global explosion of rage that many of us had been expecting and hoping for. Like the crisis itself this has taken many forms, from the return of large scale strikes, to 'commodity riots'; from the emergence of the graduate without a future to the rise of the global occupy movement which has inspired and frustrated in equal measure. These expressions of anger are shifting public discourses and, at times, winning material gains. But they are also increasingly hitting limits. These limits bound our activity in two dimensions: firstly, the political ideas we are using to express our understanding of the world and communicate our dreams of a better one are reaching the limits of their potential; and, equally, the forms that these ideas are physically taking, the organisational structures through which we move, are also reaching their boundaries. The theory and practice of emancipatory politics must be rethought in light of the events and experiences of 2011.

In this issue we hope to return to the topic of organisation. In the first part of a SHIFT exclusive (of which the second will be published in Issue 15), Michael Hardt and John Holloway debate the merits of institutions and organisation. There is certainly tension between, on one hand, the open, networked forms of resistance which erupted in 2011 and which seemed to capture the hearts of a global media - which fell over itself to declare this "twitter revolution" the new zeitgeist - and, on the other hand, more long term, perhaps more rigid organisational structures. Learning to negotiate this tension may well be the key task of 2012. How can we move from resistance to the exercise of an emancipatory political power?

Of course this won't be easy. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's transcribed talk (p.10) from Auto Italia's event "We Have Our Own Concept of Time and Motion" outlines some of the key features of the political terrain in 2012. Bifo argues that the social body has been fragmented so as to be compatible with new forms of work and discipline. Our increasingly precarious lives are making acts of solidarity, and political organising, harder than ever. SHIFT will be continuing the discussions surrounding precarity in an online series starting soon.

If the surprises and challenges that 2012 will surely bring are as yet unknown, we can be certain that developing forms of organisation and practice that are appropriate to the political landscape of 2012 will best prepare us for what may arise.

B.L, L.W, R.S, J.H.

towards an anti-capitalist plan c?

an interview with david harvie

“Plan A for austerity prioritises markets, while plan B is much more state-orientated. Plan C must take us beyond both states and markets; and so it can only be a movement and a perspective.”

Shift Magazine: There has been much talk of finding an economic ‘plan B’ in the media recently, notably with the New Statesman publishing nine respected economists’ suggestions for George Osborne in October. Could you briefly outline what you see plan A as being and the politics of those calling for plan B?

David Harvie: Plan A means austerity. The Con-Dem government’s plan is to eliminate the UK’s structural fiscal deficit by 2014–15 – essentially the amount by which the government’s expenditure exceeds its income and hence the amount it must borrow each year. To eliminate this deficit the government plans to make public spending cuts of £130 billion over five years. We know what this means: cuts in child benefits; the closure of libraries, youth centres, swimming pools and the like; the abolition of the educational maintenance allowance (EMA); the tripling of university tuition fees; pay cuts and freezes, increased pension contributions and job losses for public-sector workers.

The government argues that this deficit reduction is necessary in order to reduce

the money spent on ‘servicing’ Britain’s public or sovereign debt, i.e. making interest payments to creditors. The cost of servicing debt depends upon two variables: (1) the size of the total debt, and (2) the rate of interest, also known as the ‘cost of borrowing’. Osborne has argued his policies are vindicated by events in the so-called PIIGS – Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Spain – especially Greece. The ‘markets’ doubt the ability of those states to repay their sovereign debt and thus demand a much higher rate of interest as ‘reward’ for taking the risk of lending to them. In contrast, Britain, with its ‘credible’ deficit-reduction plan, can still borrow ‘cheaply’, which keeps down its debt-servicing costs.

But ‘cost of borrowing’ arguments aside, ‘plan A’ for austerity isn’t working, even on its own terms. What’s perhaps surprising is how much of the criticism has come from quite respectable, mainstream or even neoliberal economists and commentators. David Blanchflower, for example, is a former member of the Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee – he is, or was, a capitalist policy-maker. But he has written (just after the publication of Osborne’s Comprehensive Spending Review of October 2010) of the government’s cuts

being ‘wildly unnecessary, misguided, doctrinaire and potentially dangerous’ and of ‘the Chancellor jump[ing] off the cliff’. More recently (in November 2011) he wrote:

“It is becoming increasingly apparent that Cameron is A) totally out of his depth when it comes to the economy; B) has no clue what to do to fix the problem; C) has little sympathy for those who are less fortunate than he is. He just doesn’t care. Cameron has failed to recognise that his government’s economic policies are in complete disarray, and all he can do is resort to spin and obfuscation. Austerity in the UK has failed.”

Even Financial Times journalist and arch-neoliberal Martin Wolf has described the government’s policies as ‘fiscal policy set on Kamikaze tightening’.

The problem is that, despite the spending cuts, the deficit isn’t falling as fast as it’s supposed to. This is pretty much for the reasons predicted by Blanchflower and other economists critical of the government. The economy is stagnant and has certainly not recovered in the way Osborne, Cameron, Clegg et al. had hoped. Worker-consumers are not earning and

spending, businesses are not investing. So tax receipts (income for the government) are ‘thin’, while spending on out-of-work benefits remains higher than expected. Osborne has admitted that spending cuts will continue into the next parliament, i.e. beyond 2014–15.

But the government has consistently and stubbornly refused to alter its policy. At the end of 2010, the prime minister’s spokesperson argued: “It is quite normal for government officials to be thinking about alternative scenarios [but] ministers haven’t asked for advice on ‘plan B’ because they are very clear that the plan we have is the right plan.”

In the middle of 2011 Osborne boasted: “The rock upon which the stability of the British economy rests at the moment is our credible fiscal plan”, i.e. austerity. And at the end of 2011, Cameron was still sticking to the plan. In this environment, it’s not surprising that many critical voices are proposing alternatives to austerity,

and nor is it a surprise they are dubbing them ‘plan B’. As you say, in October, the New Statesman invited nine ‘leading economists’ to write open letters to the chancellor, under the headline ‘This is plan B’. Also in October, the think-tank Compass published a report entitled Plan B: A Good Economy for a Good Society; the report’s launch was coordinated with a letter to The Observer signed by more than a hundred academics, and The Observer weighed in with its own sympathetic editorial.

But the policies proposed here are a mixed bag. There is no single ‘plan B’; rather there is loose set of various plan Bs. The authors of these plan Bs are equally heterogeneous, united only by the fact that they are critical of the government’s current policies. The Compass group is left-of-centre and the authors of its plan B report include a number of socialists; the list of signatories of The Observer letter included individuals that I would call comrades. Plan B advocates also include members of think-tanks such as the New Economics

Foundation, which is best described as ‘progressive’. Towards the other end of the plan B spectrum are thoroughly mainstream economists, such as Blanchflower, the ex-MPC member; Christopher Pissarides, who received the Nobel prize in 2010 for his ‘analysis of markets with search frictions’; Jeffery Sachs, unrepentant architect of ‘shock therapy’ in Bolivia, Poland and Russia from the mid-1980s to the early ’90s; and George Magnus, an advisor to UBS Investment Bank.

SM: Do you see plan B as having the potential to resolve the current crisis? If so for whom?

DH: Well, as I’ve said, the various policies suggested under the plan B heading are a mixed bag. Those advocated in the Compass report are the most comprehensive and coherent. They propose a whole range of policies including: new investment in renewable energy and energy-efficiency; new investment in public transport; a new round of ‘quantitative easing’; increasing



benefit levels; increasing the minimum wage; 'tackling executive pay at the top'; 'reforming the city and the banks'; reducing working time; more public provision of childcare; encouraging trade-union membership; encouraging employee-owned firms and cooperatives; requiring workers' councils for large firms.

Many of these policies are very attractive: there's nothing like three plus decades of neoliberalism to make you feel a certain nostalgia for social democracy! Certainly policies like this would go some way towards resolving what Ed Miliband has described as 'a "quiet crisis" unfolding in British households squeezed and disoriented by stagnant incomes and inflation, leading to a steady decline in living standards'; and which is really a crisis of social reproduction, that is, a crisis in our ability to reproduce ourselves as 21st-century humans. But this plan, like the yearning for social democracy, is also utterly utopian. The models of political organisation that built and sustained social democratic institutions no longer exist. What makes Compass's plan B quite unrealistic is the absence of any socio-political actor that could actually make it happen. The plan seems to be addressed to politicians and policy-makers. But in the absence of mass organisations of the working class and, more generally, mass struggles applying pressure from below, why on earth would they even attempt to implement a set of policies so clearly against the short-term interests of capital – certainly the sectors of capital most dominant in the UK? (Whether such a plan B might be in the longer-term interests of capital is a much more open question, but we know that capital is myopic.)

The policies advocated by the nine economists in the New Statesman are as partial – mostly just a couple of policy fillips – as they are heterogeneous. At one extreme, Ann Pettifor's 'launch a green new deal' is, like Compass's plan B, quite attractive but also rather utopian. At the other, Pissarides suggests that VAT should be cut from 20% to 17.5% and that the Chancellor 'should start the spending cuts gradually and respond to the state of the economy. It should go deeper only when the recovery is more robust'. It's possible the

'more flexible approach' Pissarides advocates might 'work', but it's hard to see how any spending cuts can ever be in our interests.

“Many of these policies are very attractive: there's nothing like three plus decades of neoliberalism to make you feel a certain nostalgia for social democracy!”

SM: Can you see tensions and differences between the various visions of plan B? How might those of us on the Left intervene?

DH: Yes, there are many tensions and differences between the various visions of plan B. Perhaps one way of distinguishing them is between those that seem to be human-centred, i.e. focusing on human needs, and those that are economy-centred. This is why much of what Compass suggests is attractive. It seems to start from our needs and the economic implications follows. This is clear in its proposal to:

“train a vast carbon army to crawl over all the buildings in the UK making them energy efficient and fitting renewables such as solar photovoltaics. This will generate a huge range of jobs from engineers, energy accountants through to solar roof fitters, loft insulators and draught strippers.”

But we should be suspicious of proposals that start off from the need for 'employment generation' in general. We have numerous needs (many of them not current-

ly met), including warm and well-insulated buildings; and I think we have work – by which I mean purposeful human activity – to do to meet those needs. But saying we have work to do to fulfil our needs is very different from saying we need jobs!

Another way of thinking through the various plan Bs is to look at what they say on the questions of economic growth and debt. And I think we should understand these twin questions as fault-lines or even frontlines of struggle. Take Sachs's open letter to Osborne, for example:

'As you know, I supported your government's call for getting the deficit under control and I like it that this coalition government is taking a five-year perspective and laying out a medium-term expenditure framework. It was and is important to get deficits under control...'

Once we accept proposals that aim to grow our way out of this crisis – 'to keep the economy moving forward' as Magnus writes in his letter – or proposals that accept the logic that some cuts are necessary to 'control' the deficit, then we are on enemy terrain.

If we on the Left are to intervene in debates around plan B – and I think we should – then our interventions should focus, firstly, on trying to open up these twin fault-lines around the questions of economic growth and debt and emphasising that human needs must be prioritised. Secondly, they must make the basic point that human beings make history: 'class struggle is the motor of history', as the old Marxist dictum has it. That is, we have to start where we are and we have to start from human beings' concrete practices – regardless of whether we call these practices 'struggle' or not – rather than looking upwards to politicians and policy-makers. This is the real flaw in plan B – human agency is completely ignored.

SM: In the context of a deepening crisis and increasingly authoritarian 'management' by the state what might an anti-capitalist Plan C look like?

DH: Plan C follows from the above, but I

don't know exactly what it might look like. I don't think there will be a single plan C, more likely a range of plan Cs. Or it might be better to think of plan C as a perspective. I don't think it's too glib to say that plan A for austerity prioritises markets, while plan B is much more state-orientated. Plan C then must take us beyond both states and markets; and so it can only be a movement and a perspective. Perhaps C stands for commons (or commoning), or communism (or communisation).]

“What makes Compass's plan B quite unrealistic is the absence of any socio-political actor that could actually make it happen”

We have to start from where we are, from practices that people are already engaged in: this includes various struggles, such as the student movement, the occupy movement, struggles of public-sector workers and electricians. It might also include people's attempts to meet their own human needs – i.e. manage their own social reproduction – outside of market relations. This is what people are doing when they occupy an abandoned bank, say, and create a library and a crèche and meeting space and so on: they are challenging private property and creating commons.

It's also what people would be doing if they were to find some way of refusing to pay market prices for energy or transport. Such strategies of "self-reduction" were widespread in Italy in the 1970s. They have also been adopted in post-apartheid South Africa with 'struggle electricians' reconnecting neighbours' cut-off power. And they are now emerging in parts of Greece as well. It's what people would be doing if they were to repudiate debt – mortgage debt, student debt, credit card debt – and

refuse to pay. Here we have the examples of the anti-poll tax movement in Britain in the late 1980s and early '90s, and in the US there are the very recent attempts both to launch a mass campaign of non-payment of student debt and to prevent foreclosures of homes and evictions.

I don't think plan C should be about campaigns so much as about politicising existing practices, attempting to join dots, and this might include politicising the plan Bs, that is, highlighting the fault-lines on growth, debt and human needs.

To reiterate some of the above, plan A for austerity hardly qualifies as a plan at all: it's simply more of the same, and more of the same isn't even working on its own terms. There is no single plan B, more a broad set of plan Bs; but they mostly share the aspiration to be Plan-like, that is, Plan with a capital P, assuming the certainty, and with it the arrogance, of old Soviet Five Year Plans. 'Plan C' is more of a perspective, a perspective that can help guide our movement; it's a way of trying to understand our world, a way of looking at what's happening. If it's a plan at all, then it's a very open and flexible one. Perhaps it's better to think of plan C as a compass – not to be confused with the Compass group discussed above. Like a compass, plan C is a guide to movement, an aid for navigating difficult terrain. But it's not fool proof. A compass requires careful interpretation and certain 'corrections' must be made depending on your location. After all, whatever the attractions of magnetic communism, we're seeking something truer!

David Harvie is a member of the writing collective The Free Association (www.freelyassociating.org), whose book 'Moments of Excess' is published by PM Press, and an editor of 'Turbulence: Ideas for Movement' (www.turbulence.org.uk).

Welcoming in the End of the World

I wanted to write a '2012' piece combining the insightful wit of Charlie Brooker and the analysis of Paul Mason, as if they'd met briefly in some Gentleman's lavatory. But if you want Brooker wit, Mason knowledge, or some photo-shopped frenzy of the two together, go to the internet instead.

For as Mason says 'for the first time in decades, people are using methods of protest that do not seem archaic or at odds with the contemporary world'. Overlooking the traditional tactics of 2011's Occupy Movement, armed struggle, street riots etc., the technological ease which much of last year's protest movement found itself, has been notable. And 2012 will see more of the same war on all fronts. Further 2012 predictions:

- 1) We meet the DSG again, and get just as excited.
- 2) With increased poverty comes a rise in criminality. But if we work hard in our communities rather than being fearful we'll see 'social crime' increasing – a localised consensus of right and trade outside of legal boundaries but that serves the mass not just the individual. More elements of criminal activity will again be seen as class resistance, not just by the insurrectionists. Think pirates, think smugglers, think coin cutters. But with laptops.
- 3) More community punishment (see above). Which further grows point 2.
- 4) Increased housing crisis/energy crisis provides opportunity for generalised radical action. The political movements begin to catch up a bit rather than staring stunned at the generalised discontent. And those that don't sink further into a subcultural abyss from whence there is no return.
- 5) We win something unexpected that last year didn't seem possible.

If it's the End of their World we still have time and reason to make it the Beginning of Ours.

Tabitha Bast, 01/12, Leeds

scandalous bodies in occupied london

“The beautiful, simple gesture of sleeping and living on the streets without shame or fear, signifies... a real moment of rupture in our world.”

The Occupy movement spreads like a virus throughout the nerve centres of the capitalist empire, symptomatic of the terminal crisis of this global regime. This is not only an economic crisis, but a legitimisation crisis. Never has the predatory nature of financial capitalism, and the gap between people and the political elites who supposedly govern in their name, been so stark. Our political regimes no longer even pretend to seek democratic legitimacy and the consent of the governed, as we have seen recently with the technocratic governments imposed on Greece and Italy – important laboratories for the forms of financial dictatorship yet to come. It is as if a veil has been torn away, revealing the workings of a politico-economic oligarchy whose only ethos was cynical self-enrichment and self-aggrandisement. This oligarchy represents the interests of an economic system which has no future, and yet which continues to operate as if everything can simply carry on as normal. And to think that they call us utopians!

Well, the detritus spat out by this economic machine – the hordes of people whose lives it has devastated – has returned to haunt it. These people have nothing left but their bodies, their ‘bare life’, which they wedge between the cogs of the machine. In their encampments they lay

siege, quietly yet determinately, to its glittering towers and citadels. In their vulnerability and nakedness the Occupiers confront the powerful, exposing their ultimate powerlessness and imposture. And our political and economic masters are worried. You can see it in the incoherence and uncertainty of their reactions, which oscillate from entreaties and denunciations to violent repression.

What is so disturbing to the dominant order about the disorderly appearance of bodies, the claiming of space, and the simple refusal to move on? Our biopolitical society operates through the control and surveillance of bodies, gestures and spaces. We move through predetermined spaces in predetermined ways, adopt normalised practices and patterns of behaviour, typically based around consumption and ‘communication’. Even our deviations – depression, illness and other afflictions – themselves follow an established course and are treated in the accepted, medicalised way. Bodies and subjectivities are assigned to different spaces at different times; when they move and communicate, they do so through the usual channels and conduits. Bodies must be on display, and everything must be offered up for inspection. Paradoxically, then, there is no such thing as public space, if by public

space we mean spaces that are free from private and commercial interests on the one hand, and state policing and surveillance on the other. Free spaces, in other words. Try standing still for a period of time in the middle of a street, assuming you are not looking through a shop window or participating in some other form of sanctioned behaviour, and you will soon find yourself the subject of suspicion.

When bodies appear where they are not supposed to, and when they act in an unexpected and surprising manner, they are reclaiming a public space – or, rather, reconfiguring a space as public in a genuine sense. Perhaps it would be more precise to say that the space becomes – even if temporarily – part of the commons.

What appears with the Occupation movement is a new kind of political space which is autonomous from the state, which refuses the normal channels of political representation and communication, and for which there is no vanguard or leadership structure. The cry of the *indignados* in Spain was ‘You do not represent us!’ This has two interconnected meanings: one as a cry of protest against the lack of adequate representation; the other a refusal of representation altogether. You do not represent us, and you cannot represent us!



Instead, we find a daily experimentation with new forms of politics in the form of horizontal relations, consensus decision-making and direct action. Critics complain that these movements lack a coherent agenda, leadership structures and a clear set of demands – demands that should be articulated through established political channels. But this tired old refrain simply misses the point and fails to recognise the genuine novelty of these movements: the opening up of an alternative, collective space for autonomous politics.

The Occupy movement thus reinvents the idea of a public life – albeit not in the conventional sense. Indeed, we are reminded here of the figure of Diogenes the Cynic, who lived his life openly and publicly in the agora, sleeping naked in streets and marketplaces of ancient Athens. The scandal of his existence was to collapse the distinction between life and politics, between the private hearth and the public square. Michel Foucault, in his final lectures at the Collège de France in 1984, reflected on Diogenes as an example of the genuine philosophical life, in which the courage of truth and the ethics of existence was embodied

in every gesture and act, in one's daily life and activities. The ethical life was necessarily a scandalous life and an ascetic life, a life lived in public in the full scorn of society – the life of a dog who sleeps in the streets. The ethical life was also a militant life in the sense that it pitted itself against the norms, mores and institutions of existing society and sought to break radically with them. Foucault shows how the revolutionary politics of the nineteenth century, in particular anarchism, invoked this idea of the other life in its absolute rejection of the prevailing values, conventions and habits.

It seems to me that today we need to invent this idea of the other life again. The coming insurrection involves not simply the toppling of power, but, more importantly, the active experimentation with different relationships, subjectivities, ethical modes and ways of life, in which our own attachment to power is interrogated. As the revolutionary syndicalist, Georges Sorel put it, we must learn new ‘habits of liberty’.

To do politics differently we must learn to live differently, and embody politics in life and life in politics. This is what Foucault was perhaps getting at with the notion of *bios philosophikos*: ‘The bios philosophikos as straight life is the human being's animality taken up as a challenge, practiced as an exercise, and thrown in the face of others as a scandal’ (Michel Foucault, ‘The Courage of Truth: the Government of the Self and Others II. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984’). Can we see in the movements of Occupation, in the encampments outside St Pauls and in other cities around the world, a glimpse of a new kind of political and philosophical life? The beautiful, simple gesture of sleeping and living on the streets without shame or fear, signifies, like the setting up of the revolutionary barricades of the nineteenth century, a real moment of rupture in our world.

Saul Newman is Reader in Political Theory at Goldsmiths College, University of London. His work includes anarchist theory reconceptualised through a post-structuralist lense, for which he has coined the term ‘post-anarchism’.

semio-capital & the problem of solidarity

This text is based on a panel talk (together with Nina Power) by Bifo during the event 'We Have Our Own Concept of Time and Motion', organised by Auto Italia in collaboration with Federico Campagna, Huw Lemmey, Michael Os- well and Charlie Woolley in August 2011.

I beg your pardon for the frantic way of my exposition, but the problem is that the object of my reflections is frantic. We are doing so many things without really understanding what is the framework of our actions. I do not pretend to clarify this framework of our understanding of it; I don't even pretend to come to some conclusions in this short time. But I will try to say something about the coming problem; the coming collapse; the coming insurrection.

I Semio-capital

I propose the concept of semio-capital in order to describe a form of social production which is essentially focused on the

production of signs, of 'semio'. I don't mean that all forms of social production are semiotic. I know that shoes and cars and houses are produced too. But everything is more and more translated into signs. Everything is more and more replaced, on the economic level, by a semiotic form of production.

So I define semio-capital as the sphere of the increasing replacement of production by a financial - and financial means de-territorialised - and fractal-recombinant form of production. I use the expression fractal in Mandelbrot's sense [Benoit Mandelbrot was a French-American mathematician - ed.]. A fractal is a geometrical object which is fractured, broken into fragments, which are not simply fragments but recombinable fragments. So if you look at the financial game you see that the real world is simultaneously broken up into infinite fragments and continuously recombined into a new form, a new gestalt, or figure.

So I use the terms fractal and recombinant to describe the financial production of se-

mio-capital. But what about the social forms, the social forces, the social classes - if we can use the term classes? The bourgeoisie was easy to define. The old bourgeoisie was a territorialised class, a class of the 'bourg', of the city, of the place. It was a class defined by an affection to a territory, to a community - the bourgeoisie needed people to buy goods, physical goods. The bourgeoisie was a class of physical property - property was made of physical things, buildings, machines, territory or persons. You could personalise the bourgeoisie, the boss, the proprietor, the enemy if you like. The enemy was there - it was a person.

II De-territorialised classes

What about the present social class of capitalism, the present dominant, proprietary, exploitative class? Well, it's quite difficult to define. Take Warren Buffett, the most capitalist of capitalists, writing a letter saying 'tax me a little bit more because I'm human not only a capitalist'. Well he is not the enemy. The enemy exists no more, because the enemy is 'here'. The enemy is

me, for instance.

I mean that I am part of the fractalised-recombinant form of financial capitalism, because, for example, I am waiting for my pension. I am part of a group of people who have an interest in the financial success of capitalism because my pension depends on the functioning of capital. What I want to say is that the figure - the image - of the financial class, is predatory, but it is essentially de-territorialised: its ends are internalised at the same time by all of society.

III Work

My third point: what about work? What has work become? We talk of precarious work, precarity, precarisation. But the word precarity does not perfectly define the figure or the notion of fragments of time, of life, that are available for the process of de-territorialised recombination. Your time can be called for on the phone and for one day, one week, two hours; you will be recombined inside the ever changing process of exploitation.

"You cannot have solidarity between fragments of time: you need people, you need bodies, you need what has been dissolved."

So, work becomes de-territorialised and just as fractal and recombinant as financial capital. But at the same time the social body is pulverised and is deprived of the very bodily existence of the body itself; a disembodied body in a sense, dissolved in the process of work.

IV Solidarity

So this is the problem of solidarity, which is always the central problem of class struggle, of self-organisation, of the process of liberation, of insurrection, revolution and change. Solidarity becomes impossible. Why? Because solidarity is based on a territorial, physical relationship between workers, between people. You cannot have solidarity between fragments of time: you need people, you need bodies, you need what has been dissolved.

Solidarity has nothing to do with altruistic self-denial. Materialist solidarity is not about you. It is about me. Like love, it is never about altruism. It is always about me: myself in your eyes. This is love, this is solidarity: the ability to enjoy myself thanks to you, thanks to your presence,

thanks to your eyes.

How can I create solidarity in the conditions of precariousness? This is our main problem, I think, the main problem of the process of subjectivation.

V Intellectuals

So, the last point is about intellectuals. Intellectuals, as you know, no longer exist. Think about what's happened in France, the country of intellectuals. Intellectuals are dead and tired, and now we have Glucksman, Bernard Levy (These are members of the French New Philosophers movement - the ed) and these kinds of cynical idiots, these kinds of former-Stalinists-turned-neoliberals, those kinds of 'journalists' - if I can use this noble word as an insult.

Why are intellectuals disappearing and why do we need intellectuals? We need intellectuals because the real problem nowadays is the bodily re-composition of cognitarian labour. I think that the solution for everything, the solution to our problem of impossible solidarity is in the self-organ-



isation of the general intellect as a body.

The general intellect is looking for a body. This is the crucial thing of the coming insurrection. When you say 'the riots are dangerous' [the August 2011 riots - the ed.] - the riots are not riots of solidarity: solidarity is not there; instead, I see fragments fighting each other.

I think that the next insurrection, the insurrection that we will be living through in the next three months, six months, ten years - that is, the European insurrection which has already begun in the streets of London - this European insurrection will not be an insurrection of solidarity, it will be an insurrection in the search of our own body - as a social body, as an erotic body, as a body of solidarity. And this is the main problem of the cognitariat nowadays; that the general intellect is looking for its body.

A note on Europe

The collapse of Europe is a fantastic possibility and also a huge catastrophe. It could be one or the other, or maybe both at the same time. What is Europe? Well, Europe is a young girl escaping from rape - this is the first image of Europe. Remember the

Greek myth, of the young girl Europe escaping from Jupiter trying to rape her? Well, the story is more complicated than that, but this idea of taking flight from power is the first idea of Europe.

Secondly, Europe is, historically, the university - the understanding that knowledge must be free from dogma. This understanding was given birth to in Bologna, in my city. In the 12th century a group of people coming from Northern Africa, from Germany, from Spain, from Andalusia, from Sicily met in that city and decided that knowledge should be free from darkness, from theological dogma.

Nowadays our problem is finding freedom from the theological dogma of the economy. It's absolutely the same problem; the crucial thing about the European collapse is the collapse of the autonomy of the university and of research from financial capitalism. We have to start the fight here,

Thirdly, I beg your pardon if I'm rhetorical, but Europe is humanism, enlightenment, socialism; a legacy of civilisation, the social civilisation that the working class has made possible in the last two centuries. I am not a humanist, I am not an enlightenment something, an 'illuminista' and I am

not a socialist. But please, don't destroy that legacy. We have to go beyond that legacy. But first of all, we have to reaffirm it.

So you see, to say Europe nowadays means avoiding the total unleashing of capitalist barbarianism in the name of something which is very old - which is if you want very bourgeois.

Franco 'Bifo' Berardi is an Italian writer and activist from Bologna. In the 1970s he was involved in the Autonomia movement, founding the magazine *A/* traverso and working for Radio Alice, the first free pirate radio station in Italy. Later, he worked with Felix Guattari in the field of schizoanalysis and contributed to a number of radical magazines. He is the co-founder of the e-zine *rekombinant.org* and his latest book has been published by AK Press as 'After the Future'.

An exchange between Michael Hardt and John Holloway

creating commonwealth and cracking capitalism: a cross-reading

In the first of a two part series John Holloway and Michael Hardt discuss some common themes that have emerged from their most recent books and touch on the topics of organisation, democracy and institutionalism.

July 2010

Dear John,

One of the things I love about 'Crack Capitalism', which it shares with 'Change the World Without Taking Power', is that its argument traces the genealogy of revolt. In other words, you start with the indignation, rage, and anger that people feel but you don't stop there. Your argument leads revolt toward both creative practice and theoretical investigation.

On the one hand, although refusal is essential, perhaps even primary in your argument, especially the break with or exodus from capitalist social forms, every destructive force has to be accompanied by a creative one, every effort to tear down the world around us has to be aimed also toward the creation of a new one. Moreover these two processes, the destructive and the constructive, are not separable but completely embedded or entwined with each other. That is why, as you say, it makes no sense to defer creating a new so-

ciety until after the complete collapse or demolition of capitalist society. Instead we must struggle now to create a new society in the shell of the old or, rather, in its cracks, its interstices.

On the other hand, you demonstrate how revolt must lead not only to practical but also to theoretical innovation. Although your book starts with an affective state and instances of practical resistance, the central argument involves a conceptual investigation, most importantly, it seems to me, about the role and potential of our productive capacities in capitalist society. I don't mean to pose a separation here between practice and theory. In fact, your argument requires that they too are completely embedded or entwined. In order to change the world we need not only to act differently but also to think differently, which requires that we work on concepts and sometimes invent new concepts.

The core argument of the book, which distinguishes doing from labor and identifies abstraction as a primary power of capitalist domination, seems to me profoundly Marxist. It might seem paradoxical to say that because you carefully contrast your argument to orthodox Marxist traditions, situating your point instead in relation to Marx's own writings, sometimes elucidating what he actually says and demonstrating how it goes against the orthodox Marxist tradition and at other times going beyond Marx. Although your argument

stands indeed against the orthodox Marxist tradition, reading Marx against Marxism in this way and going beyond Marx puts you solidly in line (or, perhaps better, in dialogue) with a strong current of what was once called heterodox Marxist traditions that have been active since the 1960s. This is clearly apparent, for instance, in the claim, central to your argument in this book, that the course of our project for freedom lies not in the liberation of work, as is championed by Marxist orthodoxies and Soviet ideology, but the liberation *from* work. I see this as an essential slogan or principle of this heterodox tradition.

One thing that occurs to me is that whereas in the 1970s orthodox Marxism was indeed dominant, bolstered by the ideologies of various official communist parties, today that line of interpretation is virtually completely discredited. Instead Marxist theory today is primarily characterized, in my view, by what used to be the heterodox line, which you helped develop together with your colleagues in the Conference of Socialist Economists and in collaboration with similar tendencies in Italy, Germany, and France. That's a good thing and makes Marxist theory today more interesting and relevant.

I don't mean by this to rein you back in within Marxism. Like you, I care little about whether my work is called Marxist or not. I often find that Marxists accuse

“The course of our project for freedom lies not in the liberation of work, as is championed by Marxist orthodoxies and Soviet ideology, but the liberation from work.”

me of being not Marxist enough and non-Marxists fault me for being too Marxist. None of that matters to me. What is important, though, is how useful I find it to read Marx's work and it strikes me how useful it is for you too in this book.

One profound and important resonance your argument in this book shares with Marx's writings resides in the identification of labor (or human productive capacity) as the site of both our exploitation and our power. You designate this duality by distinguishing labor (which you identify as production within a regime of capitalist abstraction) from doing (which strikes me as very similar to Marx's notion of 'living labor'). On the one hand, capital needs our productive capacities and could not exist and reproduce without them. Capital, in other words, does not just oppress or dominate us but *exploits* us, meaning that it must constantly seek to domesticate and command our productive powers within the limited frame of its social system. In your argument this is accomplished primarily by processes of abstraction. On the other hand, our productive capacities always exceed and are potentially autonomous from capital. That dissymmetry is crucial: whereas capital cannot survive without our labor, our productive capacities can potentially exist and thrive without capitalist organization.

Indeed, as you demonstrate, there are always already innumerable instances of our productive autonomy that exist within the cracks or interstices of capitalist society. These are extremely important but not enough. Your project is to create alternative social networks of autonomous productive cooperation that can, as I said earlier, build a society of freedom from within capitalist society.

As I read 'Crack Capitalism', then, it seems to me that, whereas 'Change the World' adopted and extended the project for the abolition of the state, even its abolition within our own minds and practices, this book works through the project of the refusal of work -- with the understanding that every rebellion against the capitalist labor regime is also, necessary, a development of our own autonomous capacities for doing, that the destruction of the work society is coupled with the creation of a new society based on an alternative notion of production and productivity.

That brings me to a first, initial question. We know that the capitalist labor regime has extraordinarily well developed systems of social organization and cooperation, which function through discipline and control. You analyze these primarily through the lens of abstraction. The mainstream workers movements and, primarily

ly the industrial trade unions, have also developed forms of organization and discipline into a sort of counter-power, but, according to your analysis, this too, like the capitalist regime, is dedicated to the organization of abstract labor. I think I understand this critique and agree with it in large part, with the caveat, as you say, citing the excellent book by Karl Heinz Roth published in the 1970s, that there has always also been an 'other' workers movement. My question, then, how can our autonomous productive practices, our doing, be organized and sustained as alternative social forms? I think you would agree that the schemes of cooperation and coordination among our practices of doing are not spontaneous but need to be organized. I would add that we need to create institutions of social cooperation, and you might agree with this too as long as I explain that by institution here I do not mean a bureaucratic structure but rather, as anthropologists use the term, a repeated social practice, a habit, that structures social relations. What institutions do we already have that fulfill this role and what kinds can we develop? And, more specifically, what relation can this have to the syndicalist traditions? The point here, of course, is not to reject entirely the traditional organizations of workers movements but, in some respects, extend and transform them. Here I would want to

explore the innovations within contemporary labor organizing that point in the direction of your argument. Can we imagine instead of a traditional labor movement an association or syndicate of doers or, better, a social institution of doing? What would be its mechanisms of social cooperation and structures of organization? I'm not sure you have the answers to these questions, and I don't pretend to myself, but I think you have some ways of thinking about how we can develop the structures and institutions of a society of doing and that is where I would first like to direct our exchange.

Best, Michael

December 2010

Dear Michael,

Thank you very much for your comments and for their tone which seems to me just right: a strong sense of shared concern and direction and a desire to move forward through exploring our differences. This reflects very much what I felt while I was reading 'Commonwealth': a sense of the very close touching of your preoccupations with mine, a feeling of walking arm in arm, at times too close, at times tugging in different directions, producing a sequence of bumps of admiration, enthusiasm and exasperation.

The question you raise at the end of your letter is exactly right because it hits directly on one of my main concerns while reading 'Commonwealth': the issue of institutions, which you and Toni emphasise a lot and which you develop especially in the last part of the book.

Our preoccupation, I think, is the same, but the answer we give is rather different. Our shared concern is: how do we go on after the explosions of rage, the jacqueries as you call them? The *argentínazo* of almost ten years ago, when the people in the streets of Argentina toppled one president after another to the resounding cry of '*que se vayan todos*' (out with the lot of them); the alterglobalisation movement and the great anti-summit protests in Seattle, Cancún, Genoa, Gleneagles, Rostock and so

on; the explosions of rage in the last year in Greece, France, Italy, Britain, Ireland and now, as I write, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria. Great. We applaud, jump up and down with excitement. But then what? How do we go on? We both agree that rage is not enough, that there must be a positive moment. We both agree that the answer is not to build the party and win the next election or seize control of the state. But, if not that, then what? The answer you offer is 'Institutionalise. Create institutions to give duration to the achievements of the surge of revolt'. And I want to say 'no, no, no, that is not the way to go, that is a dangerous proposal'.

“We both agree that rage is not enough, that there must be a positive moment. We both agree that the answer is not to build the party and win the next election or seize control of the state. But, if not that, then what?”

Certainly I do not want to caricature what you are saying, for there is a great deal of care and subtlety in your argument. In your letter you say 'I would add that we need to create institutions of social cooperation, and you might agree with this too as long as I explain that by institution here I do not mean a bureaucratic structure but rather, as anthropologists use the term, a repeated social practice, a habit, that structures social relations.' But no, I do not agree with that, even taking into account

your broad understanding of institutions.

Why do I not agree? Firstly, because although you argue for an extended understanding of institutionalisation, you open a door in which the distinction between the two meanings will become blurred. The repeated social practice slips easily into a bureaucratic structure and unless you create a very sharp distinction between the two (by using different words, for example), there is a danger that you legitimate this slippage. In the book, the distinction is clear at times, but at times it seems to evaporate, as in the surprising and perplexing suggestion on p.380 that UN agencies might provide a global guaranteed income (the mind boggles). Institutionalisation leads easily into a state-centred politics – how else could you even imagine achieving such a UN guarantee?

Secondly, I disagree because institutionalisation always means projecting the present on the future. Even in the soft sense of a repeated social practice, it creates an expectation that the young should behave as their parents (or older sisters and brothers) did. But no, they should not. 'That's not the way to do it, this is what you should do', said the veterans of 1968 to the students in the great UNAM strike in 2000, but fortunately (or not) the students paid no attention. Institutionalisation is always a consecration of tradition, is it not? And what did Toni write years ago about tradition being the enemy of class struggle? I don't remember exactly what or where, but I do remember thinking it was wonderful.

Thirdly, institutionalisation does not work, or not in the way that it is intended to. There is a flow of struggle, a social flow of rebellion (as my friend Sergio Tischler puts it) that cannot be controlled and that repeatedly sweeps aside institutions devised to channel it in a certain direction. My feeling is that you give too much weight to institutions in your understanding of society. Can love be institutionalised? I agree completely with your daring understanding of the revolutionary force of love, but then you must ask, can love be institutionalised? Surely not. Even if we say that we are not talking of a contract of marriage, but simply "a repeated social

Occupy an Idea

Reflecting back upon the last 18 months shows rapid developments in the forms of resistance that have shaped the political terrain in the UK, from the Black Bloc on March 26th, to the four day riotous onslaught against the capitalist edifice in August, and finally the Occupy camps, notably in London at St. Paul's, Finsbury Square and the squatted UBS building dubbed 'Bank of Ideas'. But the key forward lies in the transition from an alternative scene for activists to an oppositional movement that can confront political power.

The Occupy tactic, which has to some degree captured the public imagination, has the potential to break free from the shackles of activist lifestyle. But within it there thrives an ideology that can be the root of its downfall. It displays the traits of Conspiracy, incoherent paranoid YouTube politics placing the sole blame in the hands of shadowy elites, which beneath the surface just reveals a racist or extreme liberal attitude.

Often armed with the non-violence shield, slavishly chained to repeating Ghandi mantras, this illogical double think has seen pacifists attacking people doing Security who wanted to use force to remove an individual attacking people! Just ignore them and they will go away is not a sensible tactic when faced with a couple of coked up EDL casuals.

Finally the cult like mentality that across the globe has seen certain Occupies play down rapes or distort the truth because it will look bad show no sense of open self reflection or effective libertarian activity. These are the traits of a ghettoised sub culture, ideological chains that need to be broken in order to move forward. For it to develop as a real form of resistance it must move beyond an alternative culture into an oppositional culture.

Greg Hall, London.

practice, a habit", then probably the experience of all of us is that love constantly clashes with habit. Love may well survive in a context of repeated social practice, but only if it moves constantly in-against-and-beyond it.

Think of the World Social Forum, the prime institution to have emerged from the alterglobalisation movement. I am not particularly opposed to it and I think it can provide a useful and enjoyable meeting place, but, contrary to the intentions of most participants, it tends to promote a bureaucratization of the movement and it certainly is not the key to revolution.

Institutionalisation (broad or narrow) means trying to set life on railway tracks or highways, whereas rebellion is the constant attempt to break from that, to invent new ways of doing things. The proposal to create institutions, as I see it, says that the old roads to revolution no longer work and we must create new roads for those who follow us to walk along. But surely not: revolution is always a process of making our own paths. 'Se hace el camino al andar' (we make the road by walking - eds' translation) is an integral part of the revolutionary process. I see the very idea of institutionalisation as an aspect of the organisation of human activity as abstract labour, just what we are fighting against.

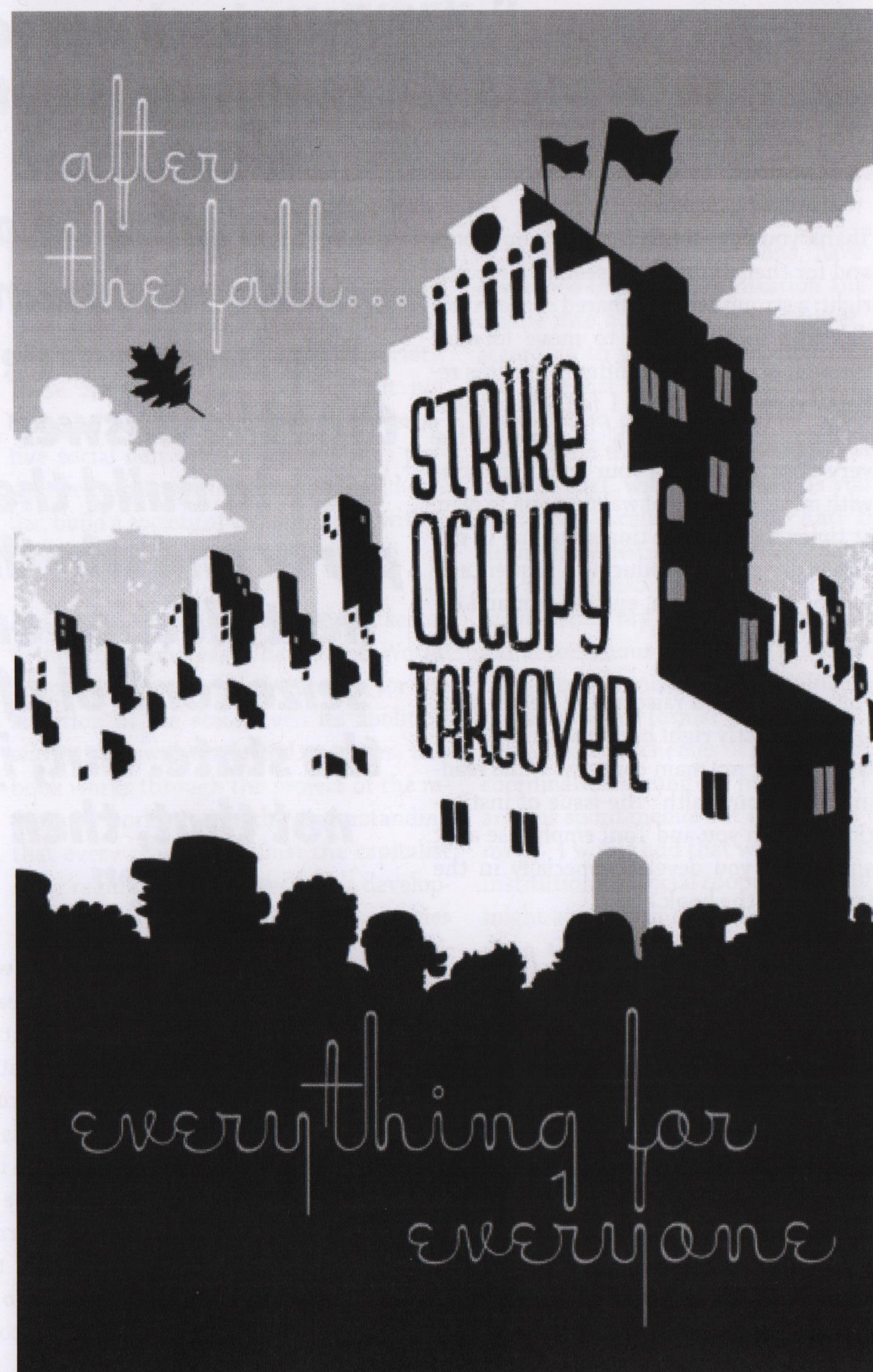
'Too easy', you may say and of course you would be right. Does there not have to be some form of social organization? Certainly, but our forms of organisation, the forms of organisation that point towards a different society, cannot be thought of as being fixed. We have ideas and principles and experiences and directions that are more or less common to the movements against capitalism, but given that we ourselves, our practices and ideas are so marked by the society we are struggling against, the forms of organisation can only be experimental, a process of moving by trial and error and reflection.

But does there not have to be a coming together of the cracks? Yes, and I think this is an issue that is not sufficiently explored in my book. I would like to develop further at some point the question of the confluence of the cracks, both in terms of

the inspirational lighting of prairie fires and the practical organisation of cooperation. But two things. I feel that institutional thinking is probably an obstacle to seeing the practice and potential of such confluence. And secondly it is important to think of the confluence as an always experimental moving from the particular, not a charting of the future that moves from the totality, as I think is the tendency in your book. We are in the cracks and pushing from there. Our problem is to break and move beyond, not to erect an alternative system of governance. We can try to follow the practices of existing movements, criticise them and see how the confluence is or

is not being achieved, but we cannot establish a model for the future.

Dignity is a fleet-footed dance, I suggest in the book. But the doubt that arises is that perhaps we are not capable of such agility. Perhaps we are capable only of moving more slowly. Maybe we need institutions as crutches, so that we can consolidate each step we make. Conceivably so, but even then learning to walk is a throwing away of the crutches. We betray ourselves if we do not couple subversion with institutionalisation. If we must institutionalise, then we should subvert our own institutions in the same breath. This is akin



to the question of identification. In 'Change the World', I accept that it may sometimes be important to affirm our identity, but only if we subvert it or go beyond it in the same breath, and what you and Toni say in your discussion of identity is similar. Institutionalise-and-subvert, then, is a formulation that I would find more attractive, but even then I do not like it. Institutionalisation may be inevitable at times, but in the tension between institutionalisation and subversion we have already taken sides. Thought is subversion. To think is to move beyond, as Ernst Bloch says - Ernst Bloch, whom you cite several times in the book, but whom Toni elsewhere unforgivably, unforgivenly characterises as a bourgeois philosopher (Antonio Negri, 'Time for Revolution', 2003, p. 109).

Publication, of course, is a form of institutionalisation and I do participate actively in this. In publishing my arguments, I give them a fixity. But perhaps this interchange of letters is an attempt by both of us to subvert that institutionality: the purpose is not to defend positions taken but to provoke each other to move beyond what we have already written.

And then an unavoidable theme if we are talking of institutions: what can I say of the title of your last chapter - 'Governing the Revolution'? A horrifying oxymoron? A fiercely audacious provocation? Or is it a serious suggestion? To the extent that it seems to be a serious suggestion, it certainly provokes and horrifies me. What upsets me is that the phrase suggests a separation between governing and revolution whereas for me revolution is the abolition of this separation. Governing the revolution immediately makes me ask who, who is going to govern it? Just as your statement on p.377 that 'humans are trainable' also scares me, for who is to do the training? Who would govern your revolution, who would train the humans? If you say we are talking of self-governance, then fine, but why not talk then of the organisational forms of self-determination, understanding that self-determination means a process of self-education, self-transformation? But if we rephrase the question like that, then we immediately

have to say that the organisational forms of self-determination are self-determining and therefore cannot be institutionalised.

Let me open a second front of concern. Democracy. You centre the discussion of revolution on the struggle for democracy. The abolition of capitalism takes a back seat, as it were, and that confuses me. You formulate the argument in chapter 5.3 in terms of a programme to save capital and then say that it is not that you are abandoning the idea of revolution, but just working with a different notion of transition. I am not clear what you mean by this different notion of transition. It sounds almost like a programme of transitional demands, a concept of achieving anti-capitalist revolution by fighting for a democracy that we know (but do not say openly) is incompatible with capitalism. The danger is that the more you talk about democracy and the less about capitalism, the more the whole question of revolution fades into the background. It seems to me much simpler to start the other way around, by saying: capitalism is a catastrophe, how do we get rid of it?

This letter is unreasonably long. Your fault, of course, for writing such a stimulating book. I look forward to your replies.

Best wishes,

John

Michael Hardt is professor of Literature at Duke University in the USA and has published several books, including 'Empire' and 'Commonwealth', with Antonio Negri.

John Holloway is a Professor in the Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades of the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla in Mexico.

homeowners, the grave diggers of capital

"There is nothing fundamentally radical or progressive about co-operatives: their supporters include, after all, Norman Tebbit."

In the previous issue of SHIFT, we launched a series of articles discussing the relevancy of lifestyle choices for radical politics. Here, Tom Fox continues the series with a critical look at housing co-ops.

It seems a truism in radical politics that if The Guardian starts to like you then something's gone wrong somewhere. When you're a member of a housing co-operative that is itself a member of Radical Routes – a federation of other housing and workers co-ops across the UK – a favourable interest from the deputy-editor of the Guardian website's money section, as happened last autumn, is an experience disquieting enough to put you off your lentils.

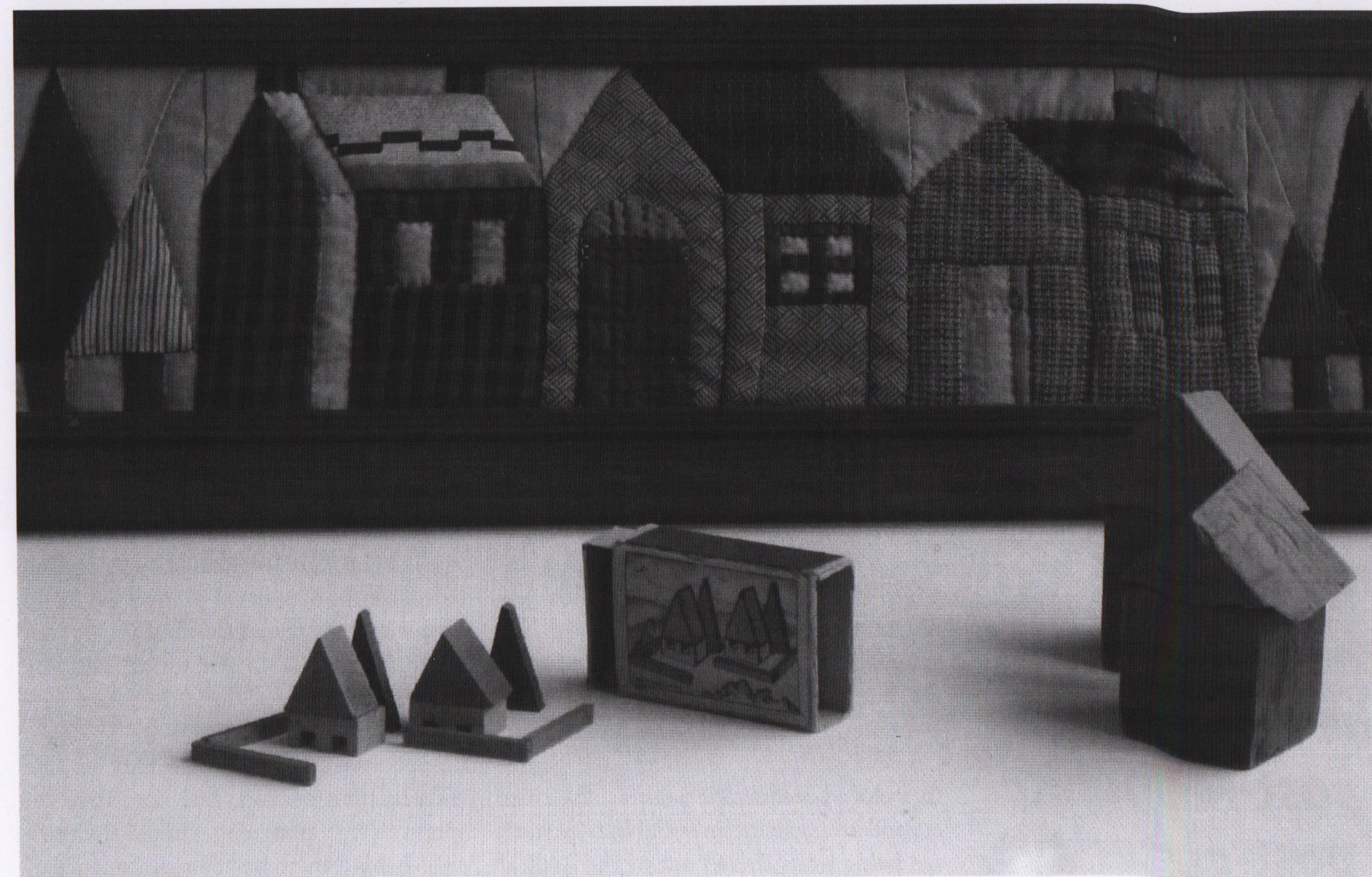
It is striking in the article that there seems little actually radical about Radical Routes. In the Guardian article, it is pointed out that member co-ops are expected to drive towards social change. Yet the co-op that serves as the subject of the article seems the embodiment of the sort of inoffensive tweeness that Islington Guardian-types soak up: ethical shopping, herb gardens,

and even the ability to 'treat minor illnesses' are mentioned. Aspirations include going 'off-grid' and becoming, essentially, a self-sufficient smallholding. It is made clear that they are not just growing 'a couple of lettuces to make us feel nice', but it seems more accurate to say that they're growing loads of lettuces so as to feel nice.

The Guardian may simply be misrepresenting the co-op in question. Even if they were they've highlighted the deeper truth of Radical Routes', and with that the wider mutualist movement's, rather incoherent politics. A few months before the article appeared, representatives of the various Radical Routes member co-ops met in one of the quarterly 'gatherings' – essentially democratic management meetings, whereby Radical Routes member co-ops decide on the policies, practices and principles of the organisation as a whole. Here, discussion was dominated by two things. Firstly, the objections of two member co-ops to a new co-op's application to join. And secondly, the ensuing debate about what constituted the 'radical social change' commitment required of individual members of

Radical Routes member co-ops, who under the current rules must spend fifteen hours a week engaged in (unpaid) activism.

The fundamental criteria for acceptance of a co-op applying to join Radical Routes is evidence put forward that demonstrates the commitment of that coop's members to social change activism. As the website puts it, 'You must be committed to positive social change and we will want to know what you do about it...each of your members actually has to spend a significant amount of time working towards a better world.' The co-op whose application to join received objections had not appeared to outline any of the voluntary 'radical social change' work asked of for membership of Radical Routes. When asked to justify their practices that amounted to activism, they mentioned going on the March for the Alternative, being poets and in bands, using gas and electricity sustainably. They rolled out the buzzwords: 'facilitate', 'network', 'share practice', 'volunteering', and made it clear that they attempted to manage their consumerism.



The prospective co-op also wanted to keep and slaughter animals on the premises for commercial reasons, and this was a particularly contentious issue. If this had not been mentioned on the application, would they have been allowed to join? It seems possible that they would have, or at least would have caused less controversy. Simply put, the rest of their ethos was not that far removed from that of the co-op interviewed in the Guardian (the co-op in question is in fact an associate member, rather than a full member, of the network; it has therefore not undergone full scrutiny under the Radical Routes application process – the ed.). They mentioned projects centred around art, voluntary work and consumerism, ably adopting the language of activism. And if that is what they think activism is about, it is because those things are all activists have been doing and saying for decades. Any slightly edgy behaviour, any 'liberatory' art project (no matter how shit), any tedious whinge or baseless complaint trotted out in a meeting ruled by consensus, any slug-sodden, exotically named root vegetable dredged from the weekly veg-box, and any effort to 'reduce' just about anything, has become the iconography of large stretches of the

libertarian left. For decades now, activists have gone to every effort to present themselves as living aesthetics of perfunctory, perfectly acceptable, easily commodified deviancy. As a result, the movement has become an ethical rather than political one.

This is a shame, because it means activists and outsiders miss the original point of the politics of everyday life, of which co-operatives are a cornerstone: finding a way of coping with social relations within capital. For centuries, people have developed strategies, ranging from theft and more organised appropriation to forming friendly societies, sickness and funeral clubs, to co-operatives of consumers, workers or home-owners, and of course unions. All have fundamentally been means by which individuals, through mutual aid and collective action, have managed to make their lives better and easier. They are not inherently antagonistic toward capital, and do not intend to be so, but in fact all are strategies for the immediate or long-term alleviation of some of the problems that arise throughout our lives, such as wage labour, consumption and the commodification of housing. They

are a means of having a better life within the social relations we find ourselves in.

In E.P. Thompson's phrase, workers have 'warred capitalism from end to end' since the industrial revolution. Yet the fetish of (for example) the co-operative as one of the tools of the 'radical' lifestyle activist is a complete perversion of this warren. During one discussion at the Radical Routes gathering last summer, some advocated co-operatives as revolutionary in themselves, revealing how completely smitten with the idea of living our principles rather than organising according to our principles some of us have become. Co-op members are not capitalists in the sense that they are profit-seekers, but nevertheless they are still tightly bound within the relations of private property. It makes no difference if we are talking about loanstock on a hill on the Welsh border with army surplus booted, dreadlocked hippies and anarchists: we're still talking about loanstock. There is nothing fundamentally radical or progressive about co-operatives: their supporters include, after all, Norman Tebbit. This is not to say that mutualism possesses guilt by association with the establishment, but

rather that we need to be honest about what it's for: slightly changing the rules of the game for our benefit, not forming an insular cult.

“the inability of Radical Routes to decide what ‘radical social change’ actually means reflects the fracturing of the left caused by post-Millbank, post-austerity politics”

This is not a problem solely with the culture surrounding co-operatives. They are merely representative of a wider problem within today's activist ‘scene’. In this, it is more important not to buy things than it is to organise in the workplace. Work itself is no longer seen as the source of all wealth, as it was in class-based politics for the best part of two centuries, but seen instead as boring and to be avoided. The Radical Routes rule that legislates 15-hours of social change activism a week was put in place to ensure that co-ops remained politically active, but also in an attempt to prevent full-time work and therefore consumption. In this the organisation followed the detachment of the left in the 1990s from not only the actual problems of workers and their organisation, but their entire culture and everyday life. With direct action (and largely environmental) activism, the trend was reinforced, and, a solipsistic and reclusive counter-culture was fostered. In part this was due to the need for those engaged in direct action to maintain high degrees of secrecy and security, meaning that such actions were never mass actions. At the same time, once an action was started it

needed maximum publicity, meaning that activists presented themselves as a very small group of martyrs, protesting on everyone else's behalf. That culture now seems a serious problem, and the inability of Radical Routes to decide what ‘radical social change’ actually means reflects the fracturing of the left caused by post-Millbank, post-austerity politics. What we now need is not monasticism and seclusion, but a relevant, united mass-movement that can respond to the current crisis. We need to clearly say that we are for the working class, and clearly outline what the working class now looks like, so that we can all agree that there is a mass engaged in, and losing, a class war. This cannot be done if we isolate ourselves. The activist can no longer be a secluded martyr, but should strive instead to be both everyone at once and no-one in particular.

In a slow, bureaucratic process, the rules around hours spent on social change work are being transitioned out of the Radical Routes constitution, in favour of a more decentralised agreement that allows individual co-ops to decide their own definition of social change. But this process, and the debate surrounding it, reveals a specific problem with co-operatives (that is itself tied to a general problem with lifestyle activism). By their nature, co-ops tend to focus political problems into a quotidian politics. However, this is not a quotidian politics based around actual everyday problems (‘what am I going to feed the family this week? Can we afford the bills anymore? I need to sit here all day and find a job’), for which ‘warrening’ provides a response. Instead, what we seem to have developed is a politics that decides that changing quotidian lifestyle choices is actually a radical act (‘Do I consume too much? Should I buy an organic vegbox? Am I over-privileged?’). The danger with this is that we end not so much Radical as Christian, directing politics inward at problems of the soul rather than outward at problems of social relations.

Similarly, an obsession with ethical consumerism and lifestylism leads to a contradiction difficult to deal with. In 1838, a Chartist defined the movement by telling a protesting crowd that it meant ‘plenty of roast beef, plum pudding, and strong beer

by working three hours a day’. Chartism was a movement of millions who demanded more luxury and less austerity. Over the last two decades, a movement of a few thousand has demanded more austerity and less luxury, with the direct result being that the post-Millbank generation are confronted by a left that has neither an intellectual or organisational tradition able to respond to the current austerity drive. A schism is shaping between an ethical, inwardly directed movement of knitters and vegetable-botherers on one side, and those for whom austerity is a threatening imposition, not a welcomed privilege, on the other. We should be struggling to unlock the benefits of production for all people and the planet they live on, not denying it in order to remain an ethically pure elite.

Co-operatives are only one part of this wide-ranging conflict, but how they respond to it is intriguing. Should the principle behind them be the maintenance of an aristocracy of activists? Or would it be wiser instead to respond to rent hikes, home repossession and job-losses by presenting the co-operative as a more humane way of dealing with the ravages of capital and private property? The question of homeownership, and the relations that swirl around it, is becoming politicised (witness, for instance, the occupation of repossessed homes under the Occupy banner in the US). Co-operatives could easily be one base through which activists re-engage with the everyday lives of those they claim to be struggling for, but only if they are not viewed as laboratories for ecocentrics but rather warrens that allow us to cope with life under capital. Mutualism is not enough to deal with capitalism, a system that ultimately needs nothing short of abolishing. Nevertheless, it could be one element in the wholesale rejuvenation that the left sorely needs. In short, we need to think of ourselves not as trying to create a scene, but trying to join a mass-movement.

Tom Fox is a member of a Radical Routes housing co-op. He is a labour historian and involved in radical media.

Matt Wilson

in defence of lifestyle politics

“Lifestyle both prepares us for and helps us move towards a world where we, not state-capitalism, control our lives.”

In the last edition of Shift Magazine, Josie Hooker and Lauren Wroe wrote an article suggesting we ought to abandon the idea of lifestyle politics. Here, I respond to their concerns and go on to argue that lifestyle is a fundamental part of social change.

Ignoring structure

Contrary to the claims of many opposed to it, lifestyle politics are developed alongside a radical and engaged analysis of the world and its many problems; it by no means lets ‘the structural factors off the hook’, as Wroe and Hooker's article suggests, but directly responds to them and is an attempt to ultimately destroy them. The fact that it does so by side-stepping them is due to the anarchistic vision of creating another world in the shell of the old, rather than taking state power directly. So yes, it ignores state and capitalism, but only in the sense of refusing to allow them to tell us how to live; it does not ignore their impact and the barriers they place in our way when we try to live differently. In fact, in attempting to live in accordance with our values, these barriers are made even more obvious. Further-

more, as I explain in greater detail below, lifestyle is an explicit response to the inter-related nature of our lives under capitalism, and a recognition that what we do has an impact on other people.

Privilege

It is commonly claimed that lifestyle is the preserve of the privileged. But this is only true if we see lifestyle as a consumerist greening of capitalism. In fact, lifestyle is about radically changing the way we live, and that includes not simply ethical consumerism, but ethical consumption, which must mostly be understood as consuming less, and consuming (or using) without buying; by re-using, recycling, borrowing, creating and, again, simply using less. Often, then, lifestyle activism is cheaper than other lives. It's also an attempt to escape the allure of endless capitalist products that we are all so easily sucked into. Paying that little bit more to support a local shop may mean not updating our phone, spending fewer nights in the pub, or whatever; but those are choices we need to make. And this encourages us to think critically about what it means to be able to afford something, and what the

real costs of things are. When we say organic food is too expensive, what we're really saying is it seems expensive compared to products made in ways which we entirely disapprove of; when we say we can't afford it, we (often) mean we've chosen to spend our money on other things: we need to reconfigure our relationships here, and to think of what we want to support, rather than simply what we can afford in economic terms.

And is it wrong that people who can do something do it, even if others can't? Is there any form of activism that doesn't exclude some people? Of course, it's absolutely wrong if people condemn people for not doing things that they genuinely can't do, due to their personal circumstances, but this is a critique of the way some people behave, not of the tactic of lifestyle per se. Yes, lifestyle forces us to consider our own responsibility, and that might lead to disagreements and even condemnation, but if we want to live in a world where we create our own values, then isn't this always a possibility? Perhaps we should embrace the fact that we're engaging in ethics rather than leaving capitalism and the state to decide what we can and can't do.



It's also worth considering how this accusation of lifestyle as privilege ends up itself being a defence of western consumer lifestyles (pretty much all of which are privileged from a global perspective); working class people in the UK, so this argument goes, must be left to do whatever they want with their money; but what about the impact their choices have on much poorer people across the globe? This isn't about moral puritanism or vanguardism, but it is about acknowledging that the way we live has an impact on everyone and everything around us, and that we often do have some scope (even if it's limited) to act differently.

Lifestyle is moral puritanism

But what if people want to update their iPhone? Isn't lifestyle a form of ethical vanguardism, dictating how people should live their lives? Well, no. And, yes. It isn't, in the sense that while many lifestylers follow certain ethical norms (such as veg-

anism) this is due to particular cultural trends, but it in no ways exhausts the possibilities of the tactic of lifestyle activism. Simon Fairlie, editor of *The Land*, offers what I'd say is a fine example of lifestyle politics, but, as a result of his critical enquiry into the way he wants to live, he supports small-scale animal farming. Lifestyle forces us to consider the ethics of what we do, and I see that as a good thing. The reason many people see this differently is, I'd suggest, a result of following a liberal logic which divides the public and the private. Following this line of reasoning, veganism is a private, ethical issue, which we shouldn't insist people follow, but anti-capitalism, say, is a public, political issue which we're free to shout about. But that makes no sense. We all want to see a world that supports certain values and not others; if we think we don't, that's because we see our values as somehow obvious, natural, or undeniably right (as liberals do). Ultimately, there's no difference in arguing for a vegan world than arguing for an

anti-capitalist world – they're both just expressions of our values, but we often fail to recognise this. For example, an anti-capitalists may feel comfortable in denying the legitimacy of sexist behaviour, because they see this as universally wrong; but they see vegan values explicitly as personal values and argue that therefore they should be kept private. Again, this is what the liberal state does.

Ultimately, then, we do need to address the question of what sort of world we want to live in, and recognise that there are limits to diversity and limits to what we can do if we take our values into account. Lots of people want to fly to Spain every year for their holiday. OK, but that means many more people will suffer somewhere else on the planet. Lots of people want cheap electronics. OK, but this means that economic slaves have to make them. Ironically, the failure to recognise this is a result of what lifestylers are so often accused of – namely, failing to recog-

nise the 'social [and, we might add, environmental] dimensions of capitalism' ('Give up lifestylism!' Issue 13, SHIFT). Vegan cyclists are accused of pushing their ethics onto others, yet this is only true in a discursive sense (at most), but we must all live with the consequences of people eating meat, driving cars, etc.. Again, the invisibility of this is precisely what liberal capitalism is all about, and why those who oppose lifestyle are in fact the ones who appear to fail to see the inter-related dimensions of global state-capitalism.

“Lifestyle allows us to experiment with new ways of organising, to critically explore our own values and priorities”

Aren't lifestyle choices just about better capitalism?

Of course, we live in a capitalist world, and it's hard to escape that, but many lifestyle choices are about working outside this logic. So, for example, we might set up a tool club where a community has access to a library of things they need from time to time but don't want or need to own. This is a small but powerful step towards communalising the things we need to live and thus side-stepping the capitalist model of private ownership. And we can take it further, as workers' co-ops do, and begin to communalise the ownership of the means of production. Some argue that workers' co-ops are capitalist enterprises, but this is untrue and conflates markets with capitalism. Workers' co-ops are run by their members, but no one owns the machinery, buildings etc – they are effectively collectivised. And they explicitly reject profit and growth, using surplus income to either improve their products or make them cheaper. Some argue co-ops have to grow

like any other capitalist business; again, this is untrue. Many survive sticking firmly to their principles. Of course, many struggle because they are up against capitalist companies that produce stuff with economic slaves and with no consideration of the environment; but a lot more co-ops would survive if more people who care about the values they defend supported them – in other words, if more people followed a lifestyle politics...

Lifestyle is individualised action

...which is why lifestyle is definitely not about individualising the fight against capitalism. Living differently necessitates and promotes supporting others who are doing likewise (supporting workers' co-ops for example). As such, lifestylers develop the sorts of communities that many others simply bemoan the lack of. Getting to know local shop-keepers by shopping in small shops, not soul-less supermarkets, and so on.

Conclusions: if not now, when?

When well understood, lifestyle is very much a response to the realities of state-capitalism, and very much about creating networks of resistance and new ways of doing and being that help us escape the cultural, ethical and structural parameters that dominate our world. Of course, it presents certain challenges – but what form of activism is easy? And some who engage in it may feel and act morally superior, condemning others who fail to meet their ethical standards, but many non-lifestyle activists do so too. We shouldn't conflate the actions of certain people with the tactics they use.

It seems to me that lifestyle is absolutely necessary, not only as a way of breaking state-capitalism, but also as a way of ensuring that, if we succeed in doing so, we will be prepared to create not simply another world, but also a better one. Lifestyle allows us to experiment with new ways of organising, to critically explore our own values and priorities. State-capitalism has robbed us of responsibility, and has replaced it with promises of material

wealth which we have come to see as our right; if we don't start to live and think differently, then, if we ever did crush the state, through some epic battle, say, then we'd simply recreate the old hierarchies and ways of doing.

If we're happy to live lives fed by unsustainable practices and slave labour now, why wouldn't we be at any other time? Capitalism offers us these things, but why do we not refuse? At what stage should we take responsibility for the way we live?

Lifestyle both prepares us for and helps us move towards a world where we, not state-capitalism, control our lives. From insurrectionary acts to on-line petitions, many other tactics will be needed to change the world, but for the world to really change, we surely need to change ourselves as well.

Matt Wilson is an activist involved in Bicycology and Radical Routes, an independent writer, and a worker with Bartleby's, a worker owned micro-brewery.

reproduction
reproduction
reproduction beyond the factory desert

Space matters. As Henri Lefebvre once observed [Lefebvre was a French Marxist intellectual, working primarily on the relationship between capital and the urban environment - the ed.], we have passed from the production of things in space to the production of space itself. As early as the late 60s, Lefebvre argued that urbanisation was supplanting industrialisation in the advanced capitalist economies, and that spatial production was the privileged instrument determining the reproduction of the social relations of production. Thus he argued: '...there is a politics of space, because space is political'. The fundamental question Lefebvre posed in 'The Survival of Capitalism' (1973) remains relevant today: how does capitalism survive and continue to produce new capitalist spaces? His answer: '...capitalism has found itself able to attenuate (if not resolve) its internal contradictions for a century, and consequently, in the hundred years since the writing of 'Capital', it has succeeded in achieving "growth". We cannot calculate at what price, but we do know the means: by occupying space, by producing a space'.

Behind Lefebvre's 'critique of everyday life' is a critique of the totality of social relations under capitalism and a fierce anti-capitalist rejection of the imposition of market relations in everyday space and reproductive relations. This is not to fear 'investment' in urban environments irrationally, but to understand it as a form of privatization and enclosure that reduces social housing and social space through 'mixed development'; raises rents and

house prices; displaces working-class residents and institutes new forms of opaque public-private governance. 'Regeneration' is merely 'sugar-coated' gentrification. The production of urban space is primarily rent-extraction based, meaning that any 'improvements' are easily offset by the debilitating mechanism of rent (and its: corollary debt). The seemingly quaint, almost accidental, gentrification of local neighbourhoods that Ruth Glass (mis)identified in the mid-60s, is now an explicit global urban strategy; a central motive force of urban economic expansion. A cursory glance at any urban centre in the UK reveals the aesthetic poverty and embedded inequality of that 'vision' - and the debt-laden price we pay for it.

Exchange-value displaces use-value in the neoliberal city (never mind the non-exchange 'value' of use-lessness). If this were true in Lefebvre's time it is more than ever apparent as a material reality that necessitates an organised response across the wider terrain of reproduction (all the processes required to reproduce ourselves as human beings. This includes services such as housing, education etc. - the ed.). Yet reproductive struggles are still largely seen as secondary in relation to workplace struggles, and a 'politics of space' is yet to be taken seriously.

The Rent Devours All

David Harvey [Harvey is an academic and public intellectual whose work has led sustained interest in Marxist analysis within the fields of urban geography and globali-

sation - the ed.] has shown how large-scale urban infrastructural processes (e.g. Haussman's Second Empire Paris, Robert Moses's post-war US suburbanisation, modern China) provide a potent 'spatial fix' for the dumping of capital's surplus profit, especially in times of over-accumulation and recession. For Harvey, the 'singular principle' behind urban production is that landowners profit enormously from increases in land values and rising rents. Harvey argues that the power of land and resource owners has been much underestimated as a solution to the capital surplus 'problem', and that rent must be brought to the forefront of analysis rather than being treated as a derivative category.

Michael Hudson's work on the 'rentier economy' does just that. Hudson emphasises economic rent: 'the profit one earns simply by owning something'. This is an 'unearned increment', which to the financier or capitalist is, 'earned in their sleep'. Economic rent can take the form of licensing fees, interest on savings, dividends from stock, or capital gain from selling a property or land, but is primarily drawn from housing and property. Stock-market speculation, he argues, is largely a rent-seeking activity as companies are raided for their land or other property income. As Hudson underlines: 'real estate remains the economy's largest asset, and further analysis makes it clear that land accounts for most of the gains in real estate valuation'.

Rental incomes are an unproductive 'free

HARD WORK



ISN'T ONLY IN THE FACTORY

lunch' stolen from the economy at large, forcing an ever-higher proportion of wages to be spent on rent and basic social subsistence, and denying it for socially productive means: 'The bulk of this rentier income is not being spent on expanding the means of production or raising living standards. It is plowed back into the purchase of property and financial securities already in place - legal rights and claims for payment extracted from the economy at large'. Here lies the symbiosis of finance, property and monopoly. The property bubble, and the financial crisis it precipitated, is largely a financial phenomenon born of this form of social raiding.

As Hudson convincingly shows, the financialisation/urbanisation nexus has led inexorably down 'The New Road to Serfdom'. But his call for a 'good' (Fordist-Keynesian) production obscures the fact that all production under capitalist relations is inherently exploitative. By contrast, Lefebvre's conception of territorial 'autogestion' (generalised self-management) suggests a wide-ranging and continual assault on capitalist relations: 'overturning dominant spaces, placing appropriation over domination, demand over command, and use over exchange'. But there is little in the way of empirical research into the

form and content of the territorial autogestion Lefebvre traces - we have to turn to Italy during the 70s to see the urban realm foregrounded as an explicit arena of political organising.

New Social Subjects

While autonomist and post-autonomist Marxism is often associated with the 'mass worker' of factory struggles, or the 'cognitariat' of communication-struggles, I suggest here that the struggles in the reproductive sphere (the 'social factory') within the autonomist Marxism of the early to mid-70s, were extremely prescient regarding the 'post-fordist' context (at least in advanced capitalist economies). As such, they provide concrete models that can usefully orientate the struggles of the present.

Within the movements of 'Laboratory Italy', the role of women was paramount. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972) opened up new terrains of struggle by recognising that women daily produced and reproduced the labour force. Yet where women's housework was concerned, 'their labour appears to be a personal service outside of capital'. Women's unpaid reproductive work remained 'hidden' because

only the product of reproductive labour - the male labourer - was visible in the wage-relation. The woman herself remained trapped within pre-capitalist working conditions: 'giving birth to, raising, disciplining and servicing the worker for production'. Reproduction is the production of value, they argued, but appears otherwise.

This understanding of the sexual division of labour through the wage, led the Italian feminist movement into conflict with the orthodox Labour movement. When feminists raised the question of housework, the trade unions were forced to acknowledge that as organisations, they dealt, '(a) only with the factory; (b) only with a measured and "paid" work day; (c) only with that side of wages which is given to us and not with the side of wages which is taken back, that is inflation'. However, with reproduction understood as, 'the other, hidden, source of surplus labour', reproductive work could now be seen as part of the wider 'social factory', 'where the costs and nature of transport, housing, education, police, are all points of struggle'. Reproductive struggles thus obtained theoretical grounds for validity: with the home re-configured as the centre of social subversion, new autonomous perspectives for organisation were opened up.

The autonomist group, Lotta Continua, argued that gains for workers at the production level had been countered by inflation and property speculation at the consumption level. Thus the struggle went beyond the factory walls: new forms of tactics and self-organisation were required including rent strikes, occupations and mass squatting, as documented in Lotta Continua's 'Take Over the City - Community Struggle in Italy' (1973). Bruno Ramirez, meanwhile, noted how class conflict had been extended directly over the entirety of social consumption, through the practice of 'self-reduction': 'the refusal to comply with price increases of essential services'. Self-reduction soon spread beyond rent to other areas of social consumption including public transport, electricity and home heating, as part of what Ramirez understood as, 'a struggle for the re-appropriation of social wealth produced by the working class but unpaid by capital'.

The traditional Left's view of reproductive struggles as mere support for workplace struggles was, and is, misplaced: the struggle to reduce the cost of a family's consumption needs is crucial to defending wage gains. For Eddy Cherki and Michel Wieviorka (commenting on the 1970s self-reduction movements), during a period of overproduction, unemployment or threatened unemployment it becomes harder to enforce strikes, refuse regulated work pace, and struggle against productivity rises. To retain one's job and to defend salaries becomes the main thrust of workplace struggles (see the retrogressive, unconditional 'Right to Work' campaign presently). But attacked by welfare reductions and strong inflation (food and energy hikes, etc), worker's salaries cannot be successfully defended alone by actions in the workplace. To defend threatened purchasing ability requires struggling in the area of consumption.

As Sergio Bologna has argued, groups like Lotta Continua, organising around 'a reconquest of the city centres', were reacting to 'city planning as a space of intervention in class dynamics'. These and the tactics described above were an attempt to go beyond reified flag-waving for the 'working-class', in order to understand the changing reality of capital relations. Indeed, the link between speculation, urbanisation, the

rentier economy and debt that Bologna noted in 1977, is now more explicit than ever. Yet the organisational forms adequate to challenge that appropriation have yet to fully develop as an expression of the common interests and felt condition of masses of workers and non-workers.

Beyond Capitalist Command

The 'Right to the City' is routinely suggested as both working slogan and political ideal for an urban politics to come. Yet 'Take Over the City' suggests instead a politics that places the direct appropriation of social resources on the immediate horizon without waiting for permission from a state that would dispense this as a 'right'. Talking in particular about where I live, The 'Free Hetherington' occupation at Glasgow University, 'the longest-running student occupation in UK history', mixed direct democracy and direct action tactics with traditional demands to ensure that cuts by management were largely avoided. But while, on one hand, the Free Hetherington occupation operated on a symbolic plane, on the other hand it also went further: it inserted itself in a self-reflexive strategic location within the University campus, built on previous campus organising, caused a measure of disruption, and set in chain new social relations through its institution as a social space, as well as an organising hub.

In contrast, the Occupy Glasgow 'movement' seems to operate through a kind of rote formattism, borrowing the language of Tahrir Square or Wall Street, but eliding its' specific role in the place of Glasgow - re-iterated by the acceptance of the camp's removal from a central location at George Square to a secluded new site in the affluent West End of the city. The dull repetition of the 'we are the 99%' slogan ignores the de-composition of resistance based precisely on the fragmentation of labour; the specialized division of labour (productive and reproductive; gendered and racialised), the imposition of complex hierarchies through managerial bureaucracy; as well as the hegemonic victory of neoliberalism as a pseudo-collective project. Beyond the 'tyranny of structurelessness', the task is to find and build on new forms of re-composition such as those that led from the Italian feminist movement to

wider forms of territorial community activism based on new understandings of reproductive labour and the 'social factory'. Hope alone is not adequate to this task: it will have to be built on struggles that typify present material conditions - such as housing, rent and debt - rather than the 'mist enveloped regions of the mind'.

While Occupy Glasgow suggests a territorial capture of space, space remains reified on the symbolic plane. Capitalism is not a 'thing', and finance capital is but one aspect of a wider set of exploitative social relations. People like Harvey and Hudson have shown very well the symbiosis between finance and urbanisation: beyond a reified abstraction, the capital relation is faced directly on the terrain of everyday reproduction. A series of important reproductive struggles have recently taken place in Glasgow (schools and university occupations, anti-road campaigns, park space confrontations, battles over community and leisure services, housing and CPO's, and welfare), yet the theoretical implications of these activities have yet to be clarified for further praxis. However, with reproduction foregrounded as a key category there is the possibility for a more wide-reaching spatial challenge that directly confronts capital as a social relation, and places politics and struggle at the heart of everyday life.

Neil Gray is a writer, researcher and occasional filmmaker based in Glasgow. He is on the Variant magazine editorial group and is a member of the Strickland Distribution, an artist-run group supporting the development of independent research. After two decades of low-wage and no-wage precarity, he is now doing an ESRC-funded PhD on class composition, reproduction and neoliberal urbanism at Glasgow University.

what next?

Thank you for supporting the Shift project!

Shift Issue 15 will be available in May 2012.

In the meantime, as well as posting new and topical material on our website we will also be publishing an online series of articles dealing with the subject of precarity and organisation in 2012.

As always if you have any suggestions for articles then please get in touch.

Thank you,

Shift Editors.

CONTACT SHIFT

shiftmagazine@hotmail.co.uk
www.shiftmag.co.uk